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Book Review: Gender Sanity: The Case Against Feminism. Edited by Nicholas Davidson.

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Even to one who has read her book several times, Cott's analysis is sometimes baffling, Cott being most muddled when she needs to be most precise. Never much of a stylist, she compounds her difficulties by mentioning recent events without having prepared the reader in any way for what she seems to regard as truisms. But does everyone agree that feminism unites women's liberation and women's rights, and do we all know what the differences are? For that matter, does the women's liberation movement still exist? And what does it mean to say that feminisms are growing toward the plural?

When an accomplished scholar, whose footnotes demonstrate wide reading and research, and who has many fresh things to say about familiar subjects, writes as badly as this, one looks for the reason. My impression is that Cott was never able to determine the purpose of her study. She disagrees with other historians, including me, on many points, often convincingly. What she has been unable to do is to pull together her own material in such a way as to offer an alternative reading. Cott does not attempt to disguise the failure by cobbling together some rickety thesis after the fact, as often happens. Hers is an honest book, but even so the whole is less than the sum of its parts.

The Grounding of Modern Feminism is still worth reading. Cott's research is superb, and, unlike many who have written on these subjects, her book is not didactic, quarrelsome, or ideological. Further, she has a gift for finding new ways of looking at well known problems. Next time I hope that she will add a fully developed thesis.

GENDER SANITY: THE CASE AGAINST FEMINISM.

Edited by Nicholas Davidson.¹ Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America. 1989. Pp. 260. \$19.95.

*Dianne S. Farber*²

Gender Sanity is an argument against radical feminism, a belief system which says that all men exploit women; that the scientific method is an instrument of subordination; that the beliefs and ideas of Western civilization are oppressive to women; that women are not just equal to but exactly the same as or better than men; that

1. Author, editor, and contributor to periodicals.

2. Contributor to periodicals.

children and child care are vital only to the weak; and that the worthy goals of radical feminism justify repression of speech.

The book's title and many of its essays misleadingly equate feminism with radical feminism. As a feminist, I believe that women should receive equal pay for equal work; that women have wrongly been denied access to certain jobs in the past because of their sex; that women should be accorded the same worth and dignity as men; that bearing and rearing children should be as respectable a job as any other; that women had some good reasons for starting their revolution against the world that was. As a feminist, I also find much merit in this book.

The most worrisome aspect of radical feminism is its intolerance of debate. Davidson raises this concern in the book's preface: "Perhaps feminists are right to silence views with which they don't agree; criticism of feminism is so dangerous and extreme that it justifies the repression of diversity." "Or perhaps—on the other hand—feminism itself is an intolerant ideology that threatens freedom."

Clearly, Davidson believes the latter, and the reader comes away agreeing with him. Davidson describes a pervasive effort within both the mass media and the academic community to deny radical feminism's critics the opportunity to be heard. He asserts the existence of a "'Lace Curtain' of networked feminists" that by "hatred and obscurantism" has affected every contributor to the book. Three examples: (1) Steven Goldberg's book, *The Inevitability of Patriarchy*, on which one chapter of *Gender Sanity* is based, actually held the 1988 *Guinness Book of World Records* top position "for the most editors' rejections of any book ever published"; (2) "The Myth of the Role Revolution," by George Gilder, was initially accepted by *Penthouse*, the *Atlantic*, and *Success* magazine and later rejected by each in turn "when editors discovered that the piece would anger feminists"; (3) "The Truth About Domestic Violence," by R.L. McNeely and Gloria Robinson-Simpson, when initially published in the respected journal *Social Work*, "unleashed a deluge of hate mail from feminists, including threats to stop the authors' funding for future research."

In short, Davidson asserts that feminism is now "the gender ideology of our society," and that public debate about the social effects of twenty years of feminism has been stymied by the movement's success in preventing criticism of its ideology.

Because radical feminism has such a grip on today's intellectuals, books like *Gender Sanity* are seldom published, let alone widely reviewed or heavily touted by their publishers. With the knowledge

that few who read this review will ever see the book, I have taken the liberty of quoting more extensively than is usual in a book review to help open up this stifled public debate.

I

Consistency and organization are problems in any collection of essays, and *Gender Sanity* is no exception. The book's organization seems arbitrary and its tone highly variable, ranging from Midge Decter's sardonic classic, "The Liberated Woman," written in fairy tale style, and Jack Kammer's lightheaded effort in "The Noble Savage," to the highly scholarly tone of Davidson's "The Rise and Fall of Cultural Determinism," and Carol Iannone's "Feminist Scholarship: A Case History."

One section, entitled "Children," illustrates some of the book's shortcomings. First, the section contains only two articles, one being "Day Care and Children," by William and Wendy Dreskin, the other Michael Levin's article on "The Impact of Feminism on Primary Education." The Dreskins make some important points about the repression of public discourse on the effects of day care. Levin makes powerful criticisms of the totalitarian (or, if the subject were not so serious, Alice in Wonderland) nature of attempts to stamp out gender bias in public education. But Davidson should have asked the authors to update their source materials. In an area as volatile as radical feminism, fifteen-year-old data is ancient history.

The Dreskin article is a reprint of "The Day Care Debate," from their 1983 book, *The Day Care Decision: What's Best for You and Your Child*. The Dreskins make the point that the number of American children in day care is grossly exaggerated in the mass media, that "half of all children whose mothers work full time are cared for by a family member or relative, and when a mother works part time only one child in three is cared for by someone other than a parent or relative." Nevertheless, "the number of children enrolled in day care centers has more than quadrupled" in the past fifteen years, with these centers being used by "fifteen percent of all children whose mothers work full time."

Some important work on the effects of day care is being done by Jay Belsky, a researcher at Penn State University. If the Dreskins had quoted data more recent than 1978 (and the 1987 copyright on some of the articles in *Gender Sanity* makes this seem possible, even given publication lag), they could have offered details about Belsky's work that graphically illustrate their observation that:

[W]hile many researchers do try to remain objective and unbiased when working in an unpopular area, the absence of hard scientific proof in the day care debate has led many experts to hide their suspicions or reservations about day care and adopt an officially neutral or even pro-day care position, thereby avoiding the unpleasantness of intense criticism and political pressure. We believe that many of these same professors who are taking a neutral position on the day care issue would openly express their reservations and concerns in a climate where such an attitude was welcome, or at least acceptable.

Recent events have revealed how far we are from providing a tolerant climate for discussing the effects of day care. In 1986, Belsky publicized his findings after analyzing five studies of children who were tested in the "strange situation," a test designed to measure the quality of an infant's attachment to the usual caregiver.³ Many researchers believe the quality of this attachment shows a child's sense of trust and security and predicts future social adjustment.⁴ Belsky found

evidence of less secure attachments when extensive nonmaternal day care had been initiated in the first year of life. He has cited "a disquieting trend in the evidence on older children," finding more aggressive and noncompliant behavior among 5-year-olds who as infants had extensive center-based care. In other studies of older preschoolers he cites, children were described as more anxious and hyperactive than their peers who had not been in care as infants.⁵

Belsky's findings led to an avalanche of criticism of him both as a researcher and as a family man. Press reports at the time described child care experts as "outraged not only that Belsky would publish such a report but also that he would tout it on talk shows even before it was published."⁶ (Imagine that!) Some experts "accused Belsky of harboring a personal bias (his wife quit a professional position to raise their children) and of being publicity-hungry."⁷ One reporter, in a confession-style article, wrote of her own child care arrangements and described how she had contacted Belsky and asked him if he had ever considered "staying home so that his wife might be the one to work for pay?"⁸ When Belsky replied that "the dual conceptualization [of him and his wife] was always that I would be working,"⁹ the reporter wrote that:

. . . I wanted very badly . . . to haul Jay Belsky out of his office at Penn State University and prop him up in a rocking chair at 2 a.m. with a wrench in his viscera because he loves so deeply the baby he is holding and he needs so wildly to reclaim

3. N.Y. Times, Nov. 25, 1987, at 9, § B, col. 1.

4. *Id.*

5. *Id.*

6. THE ATLANTIC, Aug. 1988, at 73.

7. *Id.*

8. L.A. Times, August 30, 1987, at 8, Part 6, col. 1.

9. *Id.*

his work—his other work, his paying work.¹⁰

Belsky, with his feet to the fire, carefully and publicly defined his enemies and lashed out against the “‘inflammatory’ distortion of his and others’ research by conservative ‘political partisans.’”¹¹

“They [conservative partisans] have translated our message to mean that infant day care is bad and that those who put infants in it are bad,” said Dr. Belsky. “I have never said that only mothers should care for their babies or that they should quit their jobs to be home with them.”¹²

Curiously, Belsky did not claim he was disturbed by the attacks on himself, his wife, and his work made by the presumably liberal press, by radical feminists and others on the left.

Finally, so loud was the clamor and so painful the handwringing, that Dr. Edward Zigler, director of the Bush Center in Child Development and Social Policy at Yale University, set up an “extraordinary meeting”¹³ in Washington, D.C. on October 23, 1987, that he dubbed “an ‘infant day care summit meeting.’”¹⁴ The meeting was held under the auspices of the National Center for Clinical Infant Programs, a private non-profit child care organization, and was attended by Zigler, Belsky, and fourteen other prominent colleagues. At the meeting, Belsky’s brief departure from officially approved doctrine was quashed, neatly and some might say elegantly, with the further bonus of reminding everyone that the real danger was not intolerant radical feminist ideology but evil conservatives.¹⁵ And thus the “Lace Curtain” rang down on the day care debate.

The Belsky flap illustrates well a point made again and again in the Davidson book: because of the “Lace Curtain” “no aspect of modern life has been so inadequately debated as feminism.” Davidson’s own contribution to the book, “The Rise and Fall of Cultural Determinism,” offers a history of the development of the “Lace Curtain” beginning with the work of anthropologist Franz Boas and, more importantly, Margaret Mead.

Davidson describes how cultural determinism, upon which

10. *Id.*

11. See N.Y. Times, *supra* note 3, at 9, col. 1.

12. *Id.*

13. *Id.*

14. *Id.*

15. *Id.* The participants drafted a statement “supporting day care for infants and toddlers but declaring an urgent need for more available care and for better salaries, working conditions and training for workers. . . . [T]he statement asserts that for both infants and toddlers, ‘there is every reason to believe that both children and families can thrive’ when parents ‘have access to stable child-care arrangements featuring skilled, sensitive and motivated care-givers.’”

radical feminism is based,¹⁶ developed as the "latest incarnation of the *tabula rasa* propounded by John Locke in the late seventeenth century: that the human child is a blank slate upon which society writes to create a personality." Calling this a "severely reductionist" idea, Davidson suggests that to believe in cultural determinism, one must believe that "evolution, which determines most animal behavior, at some point ceased to affect human beings. The idea used to explain this discontinuity is the modern anthropological concept of 'culture.'" Davidson then criticizes Franz Boas, the father of modern American anthropology, whose ideas "sound like surprisingly up-to-date-expressions of the American left."

Boas's most famous student was Margaret Mead, and Davidson notes that she "was the great popularizer of cultural determinism—particularly as it applied to the sexes." Mead wrote that "[M]any, if not all, of the personality traits which we have called masculine or feminine . . . are as lightly linked to sex as are the clothing, the manners, and the form of headdress that a society at a given period assigns to either sex. . . ." Mead backed up her declarations with field research that she said proved her theories.

Her research has since been found deeply flawed, inaccurate not only in its conclusions but in its descriptions of the three societies she used to bolster her theories.¹⁷ Davidson notes that "no professional critique of her Samoan work appeared in her lifetime; and since there was no professional critique, there was no critique at all." He offers an anecdote that explains the lack of criticism of Mead's work as well as the curious persistence of certain ideas in academia. The anecdote concerns one Lowell Holmes, a graduate student in anthropology in the 1950s who returned from a field trip to Samoa determined to make his name by revealing how wrong Mead was. His academic advisor, a famous anthropologist, "listened in silence" as Holmes excitedly explained his findings. "When Holmes finished, the professor looked him in the eye and said deliberately, 'Don't attack Margaret.'" Holmes, defeated, "produced a standard ethnography in which he took care not to make waves." Davidson backs up the anecdote by citing a letter from Holmes to Derek Freeman, an Australian who finally attacked Margaret in 1983. Though she was dead and buried, Freeman was reproached for his criticism, "less on scientific than on political grounds." Davidson notes that Freeman's work was seen as "an

16. See, e.g., B. BENDERLY, *THE MYTH OF TWO MINDS: WHAT GENDER MEANS AND DOESN'T MEAN* (1987).

17. Steven Goldberg also takes on Mead in his oft-rejected contribution to the book, "The Universality of Patriarchy."

assault on the social liberal world view." And it was, "for Mead's work had indeed provided fifties and sixties liberals with their most essential assumptions about man and society."

Davidson makes the important point that Mead's ideas, based upon romantic notions more than careful field work, have held sway for more than fifty years, "an eternity in the progress of modern science." He suggests rightly that American social science is in desperate need of new ideas.

The sanctification of Margaret Mead began the weaving of the Lace Curtain. As Davidson writes, "The university is the last surviving medieval institution in America, in which a guild mentality among the tenured elect prevails, along with near-absolute authority over the candidates for initiation." He further notes, of the Holmes episode, that "[C]ultural determinism was such a fundamental assumption of [the social liberal] consensus that to question it was to guarantee exclusion or expulsion from the cushy club of intellectual inquiry."

Holmes's lesson occurred in the 1950s, but Rosalind Rosenberg learned hers just three years ago. Rosenberg, a feminist historian at Barnard College, dared to do what Lowell Holmes lacked the foolhardiness (or perhaps courage) to do: She publicly spoke the truth as she understood it, and has since suffered professional ostracism as well as other forms of harassment.¹⁸

Carol Iannone, in her chapter on feminist scholarship, offers an overview of the facts, which involved Rosenberg's testimony in the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's sex discrimination suit against Sears, Roebuck, decided in 1986. The EEOC brought suit against Sears, long known as a model affirmative action employer, for allegedly discriminating against women in its promotions of employees to commissioned sales jobs. Iannone notes that the EEOC failed over a period of eleven years to find any witnesses who could testify that they had been personally discriminated against. However, there were few women in commission sales, and the EEOC argued that "women act like men to maximize their incomes and would take good jobs if these were genuinely available." Therefore, the paucity of women in commission sales jobs must reflect subtle and systematic discrimination.

Sears chose to fight back, for "the first time in the history of this kind of suit." Attorneys for Sears contended that "factors other than discrimination must be held accountable for the discrepancy." They sought an expert in women's history to back up their

18. See, e.g., Haskell & Levinson, *Academic Freedom and Expert Witnessing: Historians and the Sears Case*, 66 TEXAS L. REV. 1629 (1988).

assertion, and—after several historians refused to testify—they found Rosenberg. She argued that

women and men have had different interests, goals and aspirations regarding work. For women, responsibilities in the home become a factor in choosing jobs, often prompting women to choose less well-paying jobs that complement their family lives over better-paying jobs that conflict. . . . Rosenberg asserted that women tend to be less interested than men in the kinds of equipment sold in commission sales, such as aluminum siding, furnaces and tires; and that they tend not to like the competitiveness of commission work, the longer hours, and the irregularity and uncertainty of income.

Rosenberg's analysis was shored up by at least one witness that the EEOC had originally planned to call. This witness, Mary Nelle Parks,¹⁹ said in a deposition with a Sears lawyer that she had tried commission sales "at the urging of Sears administrators" but "did not like it."²⁰ She further stated that

I cannot work well under pressure, and I was living on my own and had to be sure that I could pay for my debts, the house note, the rent. On a 6 percent [commission] or any basis of that type you were not guaranteed anything particular, and I needed to know what I could count on . . . I knew I would wake up every morning going to work knowing I have got to make this much today in order to meet my bills, and I didn't want to work that way.²¹

Rosenberg's testimony was challenged by Alice Kessler-Harris, also a women's historian, of Hofstra University. Kessler-Harris "insisted that the record shows that women have always been available for good jobs as these open up to them" Going even further, Kessler-Harris declared that "[F]ailure to find women in so-called non-traditional jobs can thus *only* be interpreted as a consequence of employers' unexamined attitudes or preferences, which phenomenon is the essence of discrimination."²² In response, Rosenberg then provided thirty-two pages of documentation to show that Kessler-Harris had committed "intellectual perjury," since her testimony conflicted with her own published work.

Ultimately, the court found in favor of Sears on all claims, noting the "well-informed" nature of Rosenberg's testimony and the "sweeping generalizations" of Kessler-Harris's. The decision was affirmed (2-1) on appeal, and the EEOC declined to appeal further.²³

Rosenberg has been villified by her colleagues ever since.

19. *Id.* at 1642 n.70.

20. *Id.*

21. *Id.*

22. *Id.* at 1635.

23. *Id.* at 1636 (noting that Rosenberg and Kessler-Harris actually played a very peripheral role in the trial, with statisticians playing the main part).

When she and Kessler-Harris spoke at a Columbia University women's seminar, Rosenberg was jeered. She was called "traitor" and her testimony termed an "immoral act" in a letter circulated through the academic historian community. She has been called immoral and unprofessional in articles in *The Nation*, *Radical History Review*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, and *Ms.*²⁴ She has even been accused of "red-baiting."²⁵ Most disturbingly, the complaint has not been with her views but with the fact that she testified for the wrong side. As a result of Rosenberg's audacity in telling the truth as she saw it, the Coordinating Committee of Women in the Historical Profession and the Conference Group in Women's History, at the 100th annual meeting of the American Historical Association, held in 1986, passed a resolution declaring, "We believe as feminist scholars we have a responsibility not to allow our scholarship to be used against the interests of women struggling for equity in our society."

Even though Kessler-Harris ultimately admitted that "the pressure of the adversary system caused her to exaggerate,"²⁶ the harassment of Rosenberg has not ended. In fact, the editors of *Signs*, an important feminist studies journal, chose not to include Rosenberg's rebuttal of Kessler-Harris, entitled "Written Rebuttal Testimony of Dr. Rosalind Rosenberg" in their so-called "'archive' of materials pertaining to the *Sears* case. . . ."²⁷

Carol Iannone, in summarizing her thoughts about the Rosenberg case, makes three points. First she notes that "feminist scholarship is for the most part politically motivated," although most feminists do not believe this interferes with good scholarship.

But we see now that when the real world actually enters into the picture, there is no space for male and female standards; it becomes either the standards as we know them through intellectual and academic history, or the shabby expedients of political advocacy.

Second, and I believe most important, Iannone notes that "the interests of feminism are not necessarily identical with women's interests in general." Third, as I will explain later, she argues that radical feminists hold conflicting and contradictory views on the nature of women.

The *Sears* case provides glaring examples of the discrepancy between radical feminists' interests and those of other women, especially part-time workers. The EEOC decision to go after *Sears* was

24. *Id.* at 1630-31.

25. *Id.* at 1631.

26. *Id.* at 1635.

27. *Id.* at 1636.

inextricably tied to a high level EEOC attorney's membership in and devotion to the National Organization for Women.²⁸ The attorney, David A. Copus, was on the NOW Compliance and Enforcement Task Force, and "was a major architect of NOW's strategy at the same time that he was, as head of the EEOC's National Programs Division, put in charge of the Sears investigation."²⁹ (In fact, Copus's glaring conflict of interest was later condemned at length by the Seventh Circuit as it reviewed the case.)³⁰ After the EEOC decided to sue *Sears* (because of its size, not its egregious wrong-doing),³¹ part of Copus's strategy was to charge that Sears' disproportionate hiring of women as part-time workers was evidence of discrimination.³²

Thus, a NOW-influenced lawsuit against the country's largest employer of women, led that employer to spend twenty million dollars to defend itself. Although Sears was ultimately vindicated in court, the case undoubtedly was watched anxiously by many companies that employ women. These companies may well have inferred from Sears' tribulations that having large numbers of part-time employees makes an employer vulnerable to a discrimination complaint. Accordingly, some companies may now discourage part-time work.³³ As anyone in the real world should understand, ordinary women with children have a great need for readily available part-time work. These women suffer when they have to work full-time or not at all.

Iannone's final point is that radical feminism is caught up in numerous contradictions. Radical feminists cannot decide whether women are exactly the same as, or different from men. Thus they try, as Iannone points out, to maintain "a certain strategic flexibility." Moreover, radical feminists cannot decide whether to portray women "as victims or as active agents of their history." This confusion has led radical feminist scholars such as Kessler-Harris (quoted here by Rosenberg) to criticize ordinary women's responses to the work world, in statements like the following:

28. *Id.* at 1638 n.53.

29. *Id.*

30. *Id.*

31. *Id.*

32. *Id.* at 1640 n.61.

33. *Id.* The Sears strategy was in fact so controversial within the EEOC that its Office of General Counsel leaked memos to the press. One such memo recommended dropping the part-time work discrimination charge, due to "the undeniable fact that a far greater proportion of the female work force than the male work force is interested in part-time work." By the time of the trial, this charge had been dropped from the case; arguably, the point is still valid, that other employers closely watching the case might use the Sears example to avoid hiring part-time workers lest they be sued also.

[e]ven after women were "sucked into the competitive maelstrom, . . . they continued to rationalize their activities in terms of familiar humane and nurturing values." These values, which were suited to family succor, tended to foster "inappropriate behavior patterns for participation in a competitive world."³⁴

Or the following, also from Kessler-Harris: "Still caught in the belief that the home came first, about one-third of the married women who earned wages [circa 1970] took part-time jobs"³⁵

It is not surprising that radical feminist strategists give part-time work short shrift: As Kessler-Harris writes, to them it is a sign of the weakness of ordinary women who are still caught up in incorrect behavior, that is, behavior different from the radical feminists', and not politically correct according to their repressive world view.³⁶

II

I would add another criticism of radical feminism to those of Carol Iannone, a criticism touched upon in both Rita Kramer's piece, "The Establishment of Feminism," and in Midge Decter's rapier-penned offering, "The Liberated Woman." The charge is that radical feminism is blind to its class contradictions.

As Kramer notes, Betty Friedan, in *The Feminine Mystique*, claimed to hear women's voices saying they wanted more than home, husband, and children. But, as Kramer observes,

she was doing her listening primarily among college-educated upper middle class suburban housewives like herself, and her view of the American woman's lot was at best a limited one, hardly applying to the millions of working class white women and millions more black women who would have far preferred staying home to factory, clerical, or domestic work, and for whom jobs were not the route to self-fulfillment, the answer to an identity crisis, but an often bleak and boring economic necessity.

Betty Friedan was not talking about the women who worked at Sears. Aileen Fernandez, a black lawyer who succeeded Friedan as president of NOW in 1975, observed that "some black sisters are

34. *Id.* at 1650.

35. *Id.* at 1654.

36. Cheri Loveless, in her contribution entitled *The Invisible Majority: America's Homemakers*, points out that fully ninety-one percent of women in a 1986 Newsweek poll done by the Gallup Organization "indicated a preference to be at home at least part of the working day." Loveless notes, however, that in reporting the finding, Newsweek said only that "71 percent of the at-home mothers surveyed said they would like to work, and 75 percent of working mothers said they would work even if they didn't need the money." The former figure was arrived at by lumping together women who said they would like to work full-time, part-time or at home. Only nine percent wanted to work full-time regular hours. The latter figure of seventy-five percent was undercut by an accompanying chart showing that only thirteen percent of those interviewed who worked full-time wanted to work full-time regular hours.

not sure that the feminist movement will meet their current needs" which another black woman defined for Betty Friedan as "for black men to get ahead." We see, looking back, how prophetic those questioning black voices were, and how scarcely those needs have been met by radical feminism.

Indeed, the worth of all women's lives in past generations seems to have been washed away in the angry rhetoric of radical feminism. Now and then one reads a brief homage to Rosie the Riveter, but both academia and the popular media seem to accept Friedan's descriptions of women's lives, pre-1963, as totally valid. In twenty-five years, no one has gotten much of an audience contradicting her description of empty suburban lives, women "living with their feet bound in the old image of glorified femininity, confining them to family life and to the home, 'a comfortable concentration camp.' "

This image of women insults and demeans the great majority of women who were not living comfortable suburban lives, pretending to be helpless as good manners dictated in that stifling milieu. Indeed, George Gilder in his chapter "The Myth of the Role Revolution," by placing women's lives in the historical context of the industrial revolution, reminds us that most women have always worked hard—at agriculture. He goes so far as to say that the sexual revolution is more a story of both women and men leaving the farm than a tale of gender transformation. "As recently as eighty years ago," he writes, "most American families were engaged in agriculture; this proportion has dropped to 3 percent. That is truly a revolution" Furthermore, Gilder notes, on farms "women did not restrict themselves to the kitchen and boudoir. Women in agriculture worked very hard beyond the hearth and cribside, commonly performing an array of jobs requiring far more onerous physical labor and longer hours than their current work."

Gilder's observations fit the world I knew in the 1950s far better than Friedan's. Surely my experience was not that unusual. I knew farm women who were proud of their physical strength. They needed it. I knew teachers whose children carried latchkeys. I heard stories of poor women in Europe three generations before me who worked in coal mines. Most of these women viewed themselves as partners with their men in a harsh world.

It is the element of partnership that is missing in Friedan's oft-repeated stories of women trapped in the kitchen. It is the gratefully acknowledged contribution of women to the family's work that has been forgotten in the bitter tales of woman's "chains that bind her in her trap." It is the truth that is missing when all women

are allowed to look at the world only through the childish eyes of Midge Decter's "Liberated Woman."

Decter's chapter is taken from her 1971 book, but it still rings true. She describes the rising consciousness of a young woman who "was born into a very real world, and not a princess, [although] it may be only a little fanciful to imagine that her birth was attended by a visitation of good fairies." This young woman was born at the close of World War II, spent her growing up years in "a community of the economically secure." She was denied only those things that it was deemed in her best welfare to deny. The young woman was given the best of educations, ample sexual freedom, financial support by her parents when she decided after college to become a writer, in short, everything she could ever desire. Then she discovered "Women's Liberation."

The heroine has her consciousness raised, learns that she is expected to be one of society's "breeders," and gives in to her feelings of "sweet bitterness." This young woman wants to hear about her own personal oppression, she wants to keep "those good ugly feelings." Gradually, in her formerly comfortable relationship with her lover, a rift grows, as "between them now, from breakfast to bed, would be the consciousness of a necessary, inevitable enmity and of the need to protect themselves most of all in the very place meant to be a haven from enemies—at home."

Decter ends her tale by talking about the young woman's idea of freedom:

... the freedom she truly seeks is ... a freedom demanded by children and enjoyed by no one: the freedom from all difficulty. If in the end her society is at fault for anything, it is for allowing her to grow up with the impression that this is something possible to ask. Even the good fairies who attended her birth would never have dared so far.

If our heroine is to have all she wants, with no cares, she must have the services of others—nannies, housekeepers, errand-runners—lesser beings among the elect, who make her world run smoothly. Radical feminism put in this context is in reality freedom only for the select few—the ones the magazines write for and the manufacturers make consumer goods for. While they are having it all, they also demand that society collectively free them from any troubling guilt for their actions or inactions, especially as regards their behavior toward their children.³⁷

37. See, e.g., N.Y. Times, March 22, 1989, at 6, § B, col. 1. The article discusses problems beginning to appear among some pre-school and elementary school age children of those two-career couples who employ nannies, au pairs, and housekeepers. Priscilla Vail, a private school administrator, said "we had begun to see bright children from highly edu-

III

Taken together, the essays in this collection make a convincing case that radical feminism is an intolerant ideology. In the preface the editor asks, "Is there a viable alternative?" He does not offer one. While several articles hint at alternatives, none really offers a cohesive prescription for a less destructive ideology, one that promises fair treatment to all without scapegoating one sex or the other.³⁸

How is the reader of *Gender Sanity* to begin rethinking the dominant sexual ideology of our time? One begins with the premise that radical feminism "has begun to lose the ideological wars," and that "it has begun to lose the moral ground as well," as Carol Iannone observes. One admits there are no winners in this war between women and men, and children are chief among the losers. In a world where the women hate the men, a woman with a boy child is compromised. How can she raise a son if she despises what he will become? How can she reconcile the moral effect of such hatred upon her daughters?

Significantly, Davidson included few articles about children, presumably because radical feminists don't talk about them. Children are an embarrassment to the Cause. Children go with the kinds of women who work part-time at Sears. If there were no children, women could just go on arguing with men about who is better, stronger, purer, smarter.

Radical feminists don't know what to do about children, the power of children to entrap women in webs of love and need. They have tried to stamp out other women's need for children and they have labored mightily over their own denial. Children are a burden and make women weak. This is now a cultural adage.

Yet if we were quite sane, if we even approached the dilemma as good economists,³⁹ we would try to balance a woman's economic

cated parents coming to class lacking in some very basic skills.' " Ms. Vail noted "a decline in vocabulary skills," and observed that "private-school pupils no longer understood their world the way 'kids brought up in these types of homes traditionally did from very early on.'" Ms. Vail "was referring to the fact that some parents today, while still strongly concerned about their children's education, seemed less willing to put in the time to provide their children with certain basic skills."

38. Davidson does include two articles by Cheri Loveless, a founder of the support organization Mothers at Home. One, *Heirs to a Movement: Today's Guilty Mothers*, spells out the conflicts a woman today faces when she tries to reconcile home and work. Loveless offers the sensible suggestion that women should be free to decide their lives for themselves, but she offers no way out of the impasse.

39. See e.g., V. FUCHS, *WOMEN'S QUEST FOR ECONOMIC EQUALITY* 68 (1988). Economist Fuchs argues convincingly that women value children more than men do. He notes that if men valued children more than women did, men would pay women dearly to have them.

loss as a consequence of having children against the worth of children to the woman and society. We would see to it that women get what most women want—time enough to nurture their children adequately without being punished later by an unforgiving job market. Children make losers of women only because our society devalues childraising.

Surely we can have no peace until we admit that children need us all, with our varied talents and skills, some probably gender based, some socially shaped, but all important. We can never reacknowledge this simple truth until we break free from radical feminism's repressive ideology that would deny us a free exchange of ideas. We must make up our own minds, live our lives in support of one another instead of at war, care for our children as we see fit, free from an ideological burden that impoverishes us all. We must learn to reconnect if our society is to survive.

FORTAS: THE RISE AND RUIN OF A SUPREME COURT JUSTICE. By Bruce Allen Murphy.¹ New York: William Morrow. 1988. Pp. 717. \$25.00.

*John C. Chalberg*²

This is an overly long book about the public life of a Supreme Court Justice and his unplanned, undesired, and very brief judicial career. Justice Fortas served on the Court for a mere four years. Hounded by Lyndon Johnson to fill the vacancy created by the strange resignation of Arthur Goldberg, this "lawyer's lawyer's lawyer" reluctantly agreed to leave his lucrative Washington practice rather than disappoint his friend and client, the president. Harried by congressional conservatives, Fortas reluctantly resigned from the Court in 1969 rather than face certain impeachment at the hands of his enemies in Congress. In between there was the aborted nomination of Fortas to Chief Justice in the waning months of the Johnson presidency.

All this and more has been chronicled by Professor Bruce Allen Murphy, whose previous book was a study of the non-judicial, perhaps even injudicious, activities of Louis Brandeis and Felix Frankfurter.

Like the work on Brandeis and Frankfurter, this is biography

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